

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 04078 181045Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----069366 181051Z /14

O 181016Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8820
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4078

EXDIS

LONDON FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, MOPS, LE, SY, IS, UNSC

REF: A) STATE 180797; B) BEIRUT 3998; C) BEIRUT 3966

1. THE MOST INTERESTING POINT SHIFIL POLITICAL ADVISOR AIME
HAD TO MAKE DURING LUNCH JULY 17 WAS THAT NEITHER THE
ISRAELIS NOR THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT NOR THE CHRISTIAN
MILITIA LEADERS WANTED LEBANESE ARMED FORCES SENT TO THE
SOUTH AT THIS PARTICULAR JUNCTURE. THE UN ALSO HAD
RESERVATIONS ABOUT SUCH A MOVE, AIME SAID. FOR ONE THING
THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAD MADE CLEAR THAT UNIFIL AS A
PRACTICAL MATTER WOULD HAVE TO PROVIDE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT
TO ANY LEBANESE ARMY UNITS SENT SOUTH. FOR ANOTHER, ONCE
LEBANESE ARMED FORCES WERE IN THE SOUTH THE SYRIANS WOULD
BEGIN PUSHING FOR THEM TO TAKE OVER CHRISTINA-CONTROLLED
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AREAS AND CLOSE THE "GOOD FENCE." WHILE ADMITTING THAT
LEBANESE ARMED FORCES WOULD HAVE SOME SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE
IN PORTRAYING AN IMAGE OF GREATER LEBANESE GOVERNMENT
AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH, AIME THOUGH THEY COULD ALSO
COMPLICATE UNIFIL'S RELATIONS WITH THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES
WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS DEVELOPING IN A POSITIVE MANNER.
THEY ARE BEGINNING TO THINK OF US AS A BUFFER BETWEEN THEM

AND THE SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS RATHER THAN A SYRO-PALESTINIAN INSTRUMENT FOR DESTROYING THEIR INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION, AIME SAID. HE ALSO OPINED THAT NEITHER THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN THE SOUTH NOR THE ISRAELIS WOULD PERMIT LEBANESE FORCES IN THE SOUTH UNLESS IT WAS FIRMLY UNDERSTOOD THEY WOULD NOT ENTER CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS. HE THOUGHT A SMALL NUMBER OF LEBANESE FORCES, ABOUT 150, MIGHT BE ABLE TO BE STATIONED ALONG THE TYRE-TAIBE AXIS, WELL NORTH OF CHRISTIAN MILITIA LINES.

2. AIME SAID THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR ANYONE WHO HAD NOT VISITED THE SOUTH RECENTLY TO REALIZE HOW COMPLETE ISRAELI CONTROL OF THE BUFFER ZONE WAS. THERE WAS REGULAR CONSULTATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND CHRISTIANS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LINE AND THE MANY NEW NORTH/SOUTH PAVED ROADS WHICH THE ISRAELIS HAD BUILT DURING THEIR RECENT OCCUPATION PERMITTED IMMEDIATE AND UNIMPEDED ISRAELI ACCESS TO SOUTH LEBANESE VILLAGES.

3. AIME SAID UNIFIL WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH ALL SIDES AND PARTIES INVOLVED IN SOUTH LEBANON BUT IN HIS VIEW NOTHING FURTHER COULD BE DONE IN IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSC RES 425 UNTIL THE CRISIS BETWEEN THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA LEADERS WAS RESOLVED.

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4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH AIME WAS SPEAKING INFORMALLY IN CONTEXT OF LONG-STANDING PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH CHARGE HIS VIEWS MAY BE MORE ACCURATE REFLECTION OF TRUE UN THINKING THAN WE WILL HEAR OFFICIALLY. IN THIS CASE, IT MAY BE TURN A) THAT SYRIANS AND USG ARE ONLY PARTIES INTERESTED IN IMMEDIATE DEPLOYMENT OF LEBANESE ARMY UNITS TO SOUTH; AND B) THAT THE PRICE DEMANDED BY ISRAEL (PRIOR FIRM AGREEMENT WITH GOI TO KEEP OUT OF CHRISTIAN ZONES) WILL BE HUMILIATING TO GOL AND WILL MEAN IN PRACTICAL TERMS THAT NO REAL EXTENSION OF LEBANESE AUTHORITY RESULTS. IN OTHER WORDS, INTRODUCTION OF LEBANESE ARMY UNITS INTO SOUTH MAY WELL PROVE MORE COMPLICATED AND LESS BENEFICIAL THAN DEPARTMENT CURRENTLY FORESEES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DAMASC04078
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780294-0451
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780749/aaaabpgf.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c0d5f071-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 180797, 78 BEIRUT 3998, 78 BEIRUT 3966
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1975319
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION IN LEBANON
TAGS: PGOV, MOPS, LE, SY, IS, UNSC
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c0d5f071-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014